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Bridge to the Future

Trenton steps up with Capital My Brother's Keeper program

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**Children &
the Future**

My Brother's Keeper

A new initiative by the City of Trenton works toward ensuring all young people can reach their full potential

By Eric E. Jackson, Mayor, City of Trenton



Trenton Mayor Eric E. Jackson (center) and participants kick off the Capital City My Brother's Keeper initiative.

On December 16, 2015, I proudly announced the formation of “Capital City My Brother’s Keeper” (CCMBK). This initiative answers President Barack Obama’s call to action for communities to devise sustainable solutions to inequality among young men of color.

In February 2014, President Obama launched the My Brother’s Keeper initiative to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. This initiative seeks to bring together leaders, organizations, and people in communities around the country to work to improve the life outcomes of young people in America. All people benefit from an effort to increase the achievement of young boys and men of color.

No person will ever be denied benefit from My Brother’s Keeper because of their gender, race, or ethnic background.

BRIDGING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS President Obama has identified young boys and men of color as demographic groups that face particular challenges when it comes to achievement. Both nationally and in Trenton, young boys and men of color have lower literacy rates, are chronically absent at higher rates,

are incarcerated at higher rates, and have higher unemployment levels compared to other demographic groups. There are a wide variety of issues that affect youth development and cause long-term achievement gaps.

Through research, including a citywide survey conducted by the Mayor's pre-launch committee, and community feedback, it has been determined that literacy rates of third graders, chronic absenteeism in our schools, and employment readiness among young African American and Latino males aged 16 to 25—especially those exiting the criminal justice system—are problems that should be the focus of Capital City My Brother's Keeper. The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy at Thomas Edison State University facilitated the survey.

Currently, members of the pre-launch committee include leaders from the Watson Institute, the I Am Trenton Community Foundation, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, the Latino Clergy of Trenton, the Capital City Community Coalition, the Living Hope Church/Empowerment Center, and Friendship Baptist Church.

Addressing the needs of the community in these areas is a progressive action that seeks to prevent future problems, rather than react to current problems. Our specific community goals relate to the following My Brother's Keeper

goals: All of our children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally prepared; all of our children read at grade level by third grade; and all youth out of school are employed. As Mayor of the great city of Trenton, I first announced Capital City My Brother's Keeper during the State of the City address in October; and I believe it is time for us to get past talk and start devising real solutions to issues that are causing young men of color to struggle in a society where anything can be accomplished when socioeconomic barriers are eliminated.

CREATING A ROADMAP Over the next 45 days, in step with the guidelines of the President's My Brother's Keeper national initiative, committee members worked to organize a local action summit that was held on January 27, 2016 with the community and key stakeholders to assess needs and available resources and assets, set priorities and concrete goals. The Capital City Local Action Summit was the second of four steps in laying the groundwork for becoming an MBK Community, and drew more than 300 youth, advocates, and community leaders across all sectors of the community. Stakeholders were asked to assess needs and assets, determine priorities, and set concrete goals. Using the feedback from the discussion, we will next examine existing local

policies, programs, and practices in search of ways to introduce or expand on existing efforts to better serve the needs of Trenton youth.

Thereafter, the planning committee will conduct a policy review and form an action agenda, which includes measuring results and sharing data with the initiative's partners to ensure that solutions can have a meaningful and long-term impact. A formal action plan is expected to be publicly announced by June 24, 2016.

In order to accomplish our goals, we will need to collaborate with a wide variety of organizations and citizens who lend support to My Brother's Keeper through their time, skills, and access to networks, in addition to financial opportunity. This will be a vital commitment as a community to identifying and implementing policies that are proven to work; to forging action-oriented partnerships; and to closely tracking our progress and setbacks with data.

INVESTMENTS IN A SHARED FUTURE

Collaborating on solutions that impact the lives of people, especially our young people, is exactly what government and community leaders should be doing. It's critically important to the future of Trenton. Anyone concerned with the economic future of our community, our families, our neighborhoods, or our country, should know that empowering



Trenton takes the second step in becoming a MBK city with the Capital City My Brother's Keeper Local Action Summit.

My Brother's Keeper

all of our youth, including boys and young men of color, is an investment in our shared future, and our collective prosperity. Employers will want to set up shop here because they know we have a well prepared, diverse, and fully mobilized workforce. This initiative will ensure our community's workforce can compete with the workforce of cities

around the country and world.

The best ways to help the Capital City My Brother's Keeper initiative is by a commitment, a pledge of coming together as advocates for our young men, and dedicating time, skills, and financial resources. I am confident that the Trenton community at large can collaborate to achieve the goals of this initiative. 📌



A Presidential Plan

My Brother's Keeper was launched by President Obama in 2014 with the following six milestones as goals:

- **Getting a Healthy Start and Entering School Ready to Learn**

All children should have a healthy start and enter school ready—cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally.

- **Reading at Grade Level by Third Grade**

All children should be reading at grade level by age 8—the age at which reading to learn becomes essential.

- **Graduating from High School Ready for College and Career**

All youth should receive a quality high school education and graduate with the skills and tools needed to advance to postsecondary education or training.

- **Completing Postsecondary Education or Training**

Every American should have the option to attend postsecondary education and receive the education and training needed for the quality jobs of today and tomorrow.

- **Successfully Entering the Workforce**

Anyone who wants a job should be able to get a job that allows them to support themselves and their families.

- **Keeping Kids on Track and Giving Them Second Chances**

All youth and young adults should be safe from violent crime; and individuals who are confined should receive the education, training, and treatment they need for a second chance.

The Power of Collaboration



ACCOUNTABILITY PRODUCES RESULTS

A critical reason for the MEL's success is that its commissioners take an active role establishing policy and closely monitor the program's professionals.

"As MEL Chair and a Morris JIF Commissioner, my responsibility is to make certain we meet the needs of local governments for essential coverages and risk management support," said Jon Rheinhardt, Administrator/CFO, Borough of Wharton. "As commissioners, we direct the work of dedicated professionals to develop and manage cost-effective, responsive, and transparent programs that meet this need."

The MEL governing body includes 19 commissioners who meet regularly to review all MEL programs. Over 35 commissioners, risk managers and safety experts participate in eight working committees that produce the coverages, training, and tools used to improve risk management practices and safety.

Fiscal accountability is ensured by an audit committee including independent participants not affiliated with the MEL.

MEL efforts are complemented by the work of 218 individuals who serve as Board members for the 19 locally operated joint insurance funds (JIFs) that are MEL members. They review claims, identify member needs, and work with 75 professional risk managers who support their programs. All member JIFs conduct an annual independent audit.

Member oversight and personal involvement ensures accountability and produces real benefits: stable coverage, effective loss control, safety education, online training and responsive professional service.

The power of collaboration: ensuring accountable, quality efforts to promote safety throughout New Jersey.

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